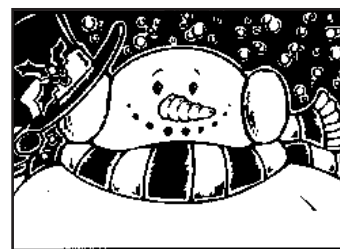


Shrewsbury School Journal

serving a community of continuous learners



School cancellation
information on page 6.

Winter 2002-2003 • Vol IV

Superintendent's Corner

Supporting excellence: 2002-2003

BY DR. ANTHONY BENT
SUPERINTENDENT

This edition of the Shrewsbury School Journal features the theme, "Excellence." The lead article reflects the many conversations among the school administrators and school committee regarding our understanding of what excellence means in Shrewsbury. The ideas in the article were taken from a longer document entitled, "Excellence in Our Schools," that was written in August and reviewed by the administrators of the district. All faculty members have seen the document and have had the opportunity to comment on it. The members of the coordinating council (representatives from all school councils) have also read and discussed the document this fall.

**Excellence is more a mind set
and journey than a destination.**

Excellence is more a mind set and journey than a destination. All organizations are always in some state of evolution, and excellence will be different tomorrow than it is today. Consequently, excellence is always just over the horizon. The best thing that can be said about a school district is not that it is excellent, but that it strives for excellence. Any successful organization that tries to hold everything in place, despite inevitable environmental changes, will lose its dynamism and knowledge base. This edition of the Shrewsbury School Journal contains several articles that address aspects of our efforts toward continuous improvement.

The facilities that house and educate our students are the baseline for excellence. Thanks to the foresight and generosity of the citizens, we have a new high school, the beginning

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Meet the senior greeters

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Building the future, one brick at a time



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SHREWSBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Students stand outside their one-room class room sometime around the 1890s. The red, brick school still stands at the corner of West Main and Old Mill Road.

Excellence in our schools

BY DR. ANTHONY BENT
SUPERINTENDENT

The administrators of the Shrewsbury Public Schools have gathered in August over the last two years for their annual leadership conference. Included in the agenda for the meetings was a discussion of the characteristics of excellent schools and school systems. What follows is the articulation of excellence as we understand it. (The complete text of the paper, "Excellence in Our Schools," can be obtained by contacting the school department.)

Core Values and Mission

If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster.

Stephen Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*

We believe excellent schools have a mission and sense of purpose that is both stated and lived. If there is broad participation in the development of the mission and ownership for it, all those who work in the district will be leaders in implementing its tenets. The school committee adopted the current mission statement of the Shrewsbury Public Schools in June of 1997. It reads as follows:

The Shrewsbury Public Schools, in partnership with the community, will provide students with the skills and knowledge for the 21st century, an appreciation of our democratic tradition, and the desire to continue to learn throughout life.

Strong School Cultures

The school's culture dictates, in no uncertain terms, "the way we do things around here." Ultimately, a school's culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse than the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal can ever have.

Roland Barth, *Learning by Heart*

When we think of excellence as it applies to school culture, several important features surface. Strong school cultures are places where people care about student learning, feel ownership for "the way we do things around here," and are able to speak freely. A healthy school culture is characterized by collaborative norms of behavior among staff, a willingness to take risks, and a welcoming and open spirit to those who visit the school. We feel that Shrewsbury schools have strong cultures. The emphasis on the Responsive Classroom, collaborative working arrangements among staff, high levels of professional development, active parent participation in school life, and student involvement in the affairs of the school signal accomplishment in this area.

Instructional Excellence

Today's teachers still contend with the essential challenge of the one-room schoolhouse: how to reach out effectively to students who span the spectrum of learning readiness, personal interests, culturally shaped ways of

Excellence, see page 2

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